

***Stamps that Illustrate
Education, Literacy & Mobility
of the Blind***

***by
Ken Stuckey and Gunilla Stenberg Stuckey***

2003

Introduction

These booklets are a collection of presentations made at international conferences by the authors 1998 – 2003 that have used postage stamps from around the world to illustrate the history, literacy and mobility of the blind.

They include:

“An Illustrated History of Access to Education for the Blind as Seen in Postage Stamps” given at 2nd International Conference on the Blind in History, Paris, June 1998. Text and booklet showing stamps.

“In Touch with Literacy through Postage Stamps” given at Getting in Touch with Literacy, San Francisco, November 1999. Text for poster display.

“Illustrated History of Mobility as Seen on Stamps from Around the World” given at 11th International Mobility Conference, South Africa, 2003. Text with a sample page of stamps on mobility plus pages showing *“Guide Dogs – 75 Years on Stamps 1928-2003”*.

The stamps used in these presentations are from the combined collections of Gunilla Stenberg Stuckey and Ken Stuckey. Both authors became interested in stamp collecting at an early age. In adulthood when they entered the field of education of the blind 1965 they started collecting stamps relating to blindness, Ken in 1965 and Gunilla in 1970. They now have collected over 400 issues from a great many countries. These are all listed in their catalog, *“Stamps Which Honor and Aid the Blind”*. The collection starts with a Bosnia issue of 1916 and continues to the present-day. They represent an interesting miniature global view of blindness and the blind.

Only a few who have been to these presentations have had any idea that so many countries have issued stamps relating to blindness. They have also been surprised that very often their countries have issued such stamps.

Ken Stuckey – 2003

Ken Stuckey and Gunilla Stenberg Stuckey
Dalagatan 31, 2 tr
SE-113 Stockholm
Sweden



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An Illustrated History of Access to
Education for the Blind
as Seen in Postage Stamps
by
Gunilla and Ken Stuckey
2 nd International Conference on the Blind
in History
Paris, France, June 21-24, 1998



What does the history of access to education for the blind show us? In this presentation we will show, through stamps that it has been a long hard struggle by the blind to obtain an education. It has been filled with pit falls and stumbling blocks often put there by well meaning sighted persons who have not understood the needs of the blind. Yet we will show that there were a few who did have the insight to change history.

Berthold Lowenfeld said that *"In spite of the appearance of remarkable blind men [and women] and of other blind people who could lead comfortable lives because of family wealth, the great mass of the blind were forced to attempt sustaining themselves by begging"*.

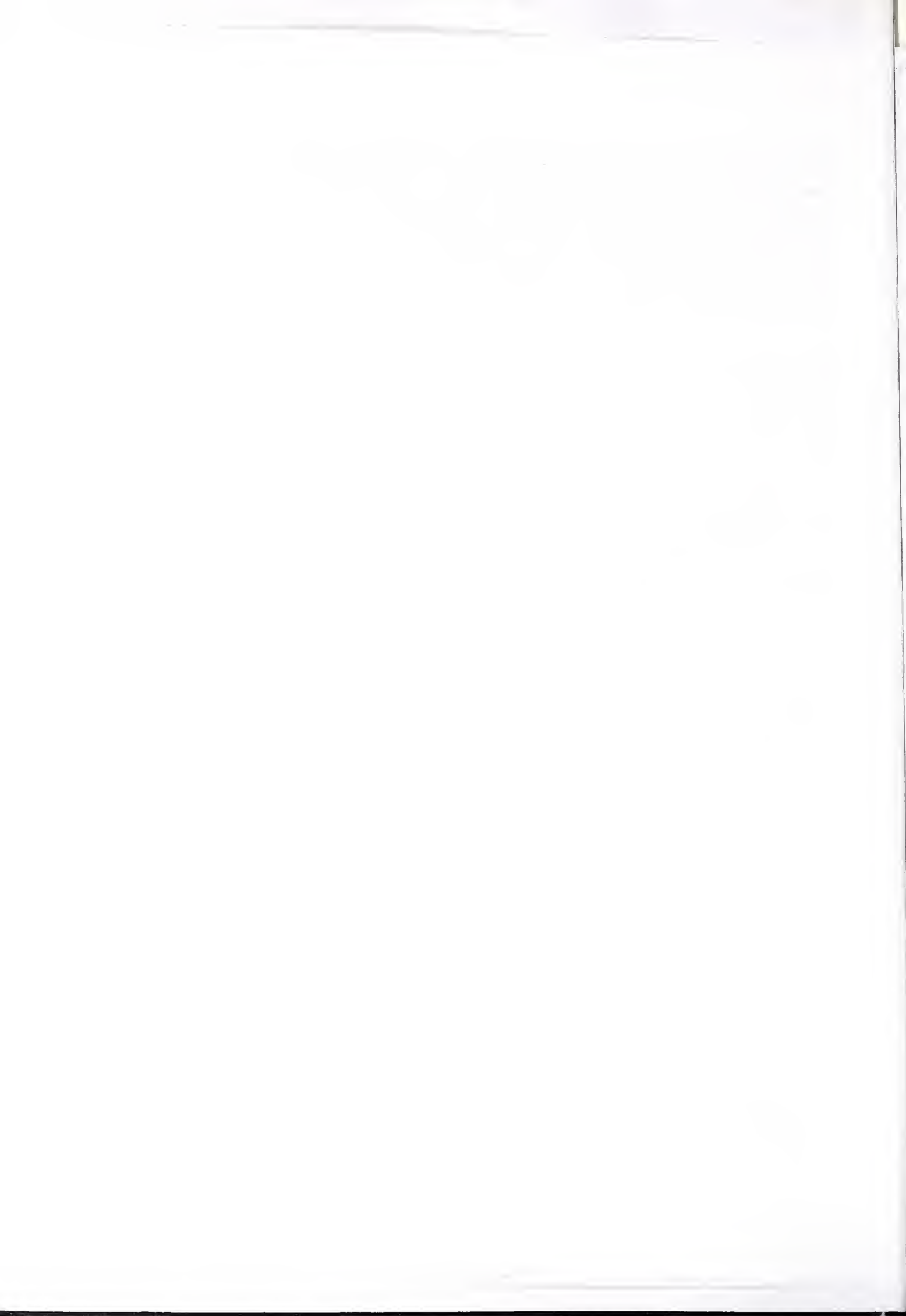
Homer, Greece - (850 B.C. - ?)1954, Abul-Ala-al Maarri (973-1057) Syria 1963, Surdas (15th century) India 1952.

Jesus Giving Sight to the Blind Ethiopia 1975, Blind Man and Beggar by Callot France 1957, and Spain 1997.

As access to information increased by the introduction of the printing press in the 15th century society moved farther and farther away from the oral education. The blind found that more and more they became isolated from intellectual advancement. Some like John Milton (1608-1674 Hungary 1967) could write using the sight of his daughters to record his thoughts. Another blind man the naturalist Francois Huber (1750-1831), studied bees by having sighted persons such as his wife and servants to tell him what they were seeing and he would make deductions and they would record them. Many blind would turn to the profession of music, an occupation in which they could use their sense of hearing, unhindered, for the most part from having to rely on sight.

Turlough Carolan (1670-1738) Ireland 1985 and Mathias Schou (1747-1824) Luxembourg 1974.

It is well known that the history of the education of those with disabilities including the blind goes back thousands of years. (Kretschmer) *"China had thousands of years ago a highly developed culture, they tried already in that time to convey to the blind superior knowledge, sharp judgment, good*



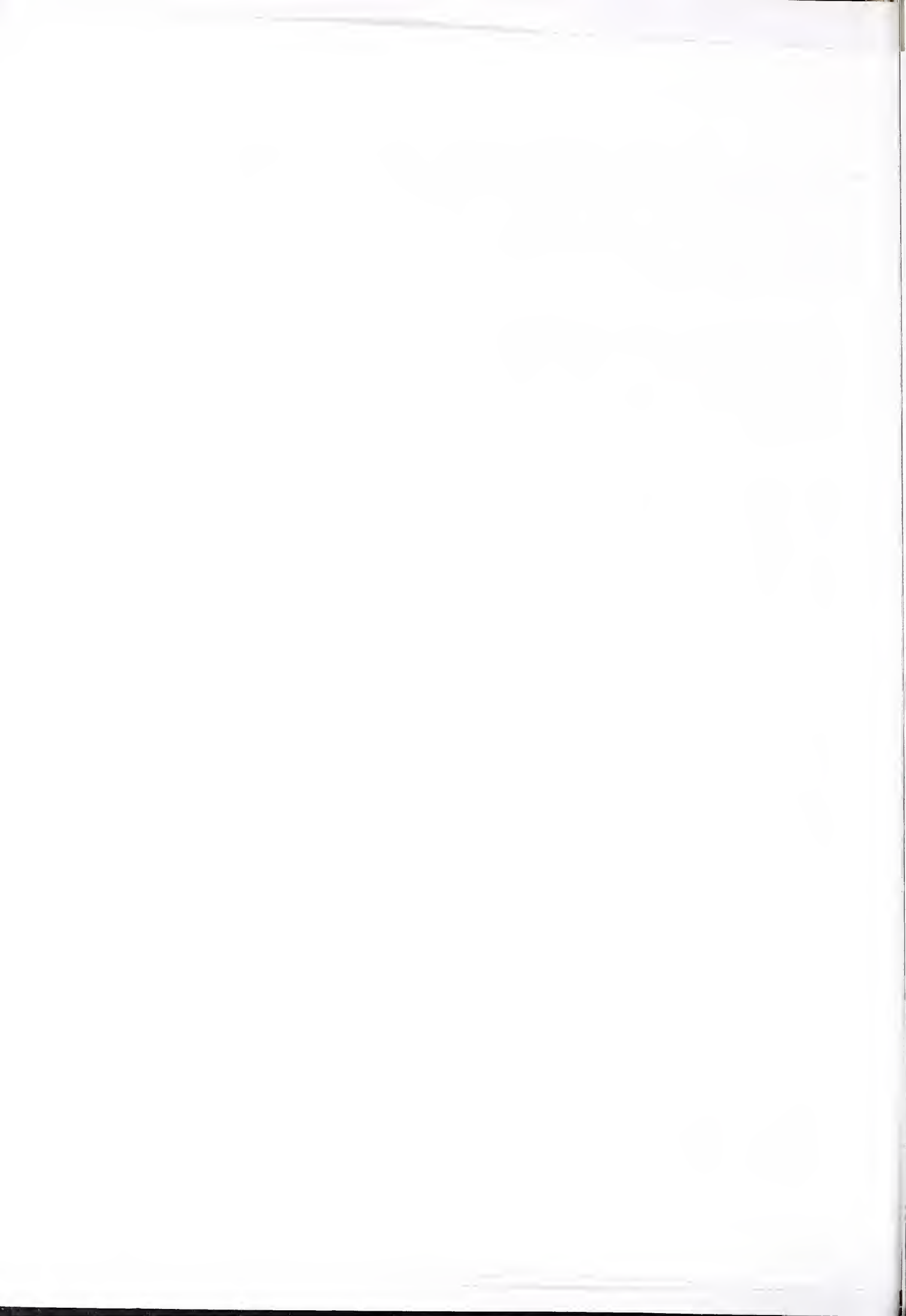
memory and a good faculty of combination, in order to train them to become seers, In India it is believed that the blind in the oldest time have belonged to the chief intermediaries of the religious and historic tradition. Before the Brahmans created the Indian science this tradition was conveyed verbally through the holy songs. "

It is in France in the Age of Enlightenment and Revolution that we see the dawning of a new age for the handicapped, especially for the deaf, mentally retarded and blind. By the 17th century France had become the intellectual and scientific center of the world.

The new era was ushered in by intellectuals like Denis Diderot (1713-1784). (France 1984) When they looked into the mental processes of intelligent men and women who were blind like Nicholas Saunderson (1682-1739) the blind mathematician, John Metcalf (1682-1739), the road builder, Maria von Pardis (1759-1824) , musician, singer, concert performer and teacher they were faced with the dilemma, were they exceptions? Could indeed the blind learn as well as the sighted if they were given the right instruction?.

The door to education of the blind was opened by Valentin Haüy (France 1959). Haüy (Enerstvedt) *"became aware of the need for education [of the blind] when he saw a blind girl visiting the public school together with her sighted brother. She asked if he could read aloud for her in his spare time. He knew of Diderot's opinions and he had also observed the work of L'Epee for deaf people. Through Maria Theresia von Pardis he heard about [Georg] Weissenburg and about the devices the German blind used in their learning and when writing".* Enerstvedt further mentions that Weissenburg adapted and further developed aids to teach geometry and geography. *"Maps were used on which the frontiers of the countries were produced with the aid of silk strings, the rivers with flexible steel threads, the ocean with sand and the cities with pinheads."*

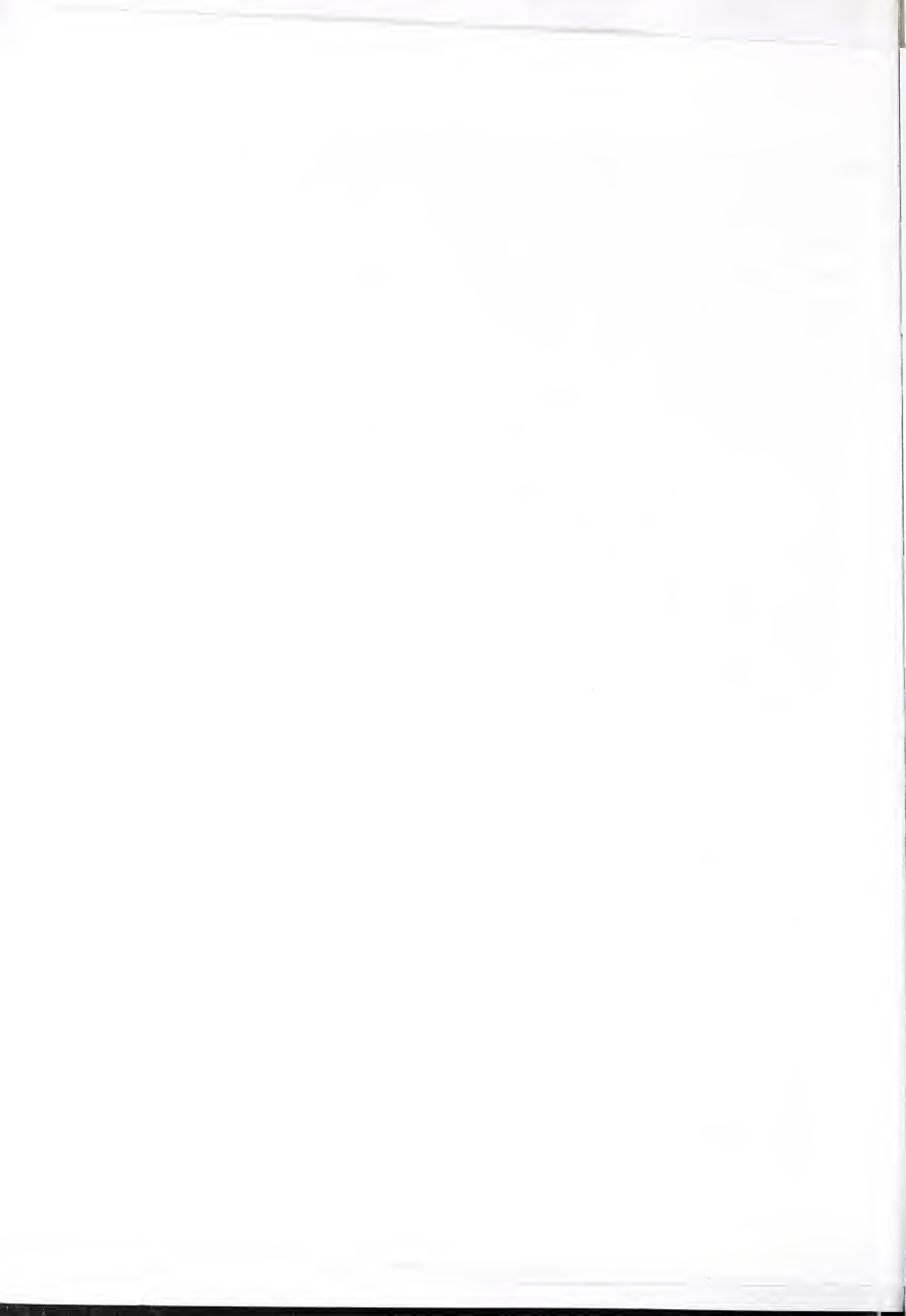
Haüy, "The Father of the Blind, as he is sometimes referred to opened the first school for the blind in Paris in 1784. What made Haüy's instruction different from most other forms was that they generally stressed hand skills such as basket and hand weaving but his was based also on the mental



abilities of the blind. He observed that they had an aptitude for mathematics and geography. In the **Swedish** issue 1981 a blind student at the Tomtebodas School for the Blind is shown studying a raised globe. The **Indonesian** issue 1956 shows a student looking at a raised map. Haüy's school placed a far greater emphasis on the mental ability and less on craft work. (**Netherlands Indies 1941, Indonesia 1956, Finland 1954,**) He understood that the key to literacy was reading and writing. Haüy read about and studied earlier means of teaching the blind to read and write using tactual forms. In 1786 he published *'Essay Upon the Education of the Blind'* in an embossed letter system the blind could read. This is now known as Haüy Type. This type simplified the commonly used letter system to the simplest forms for the blind to read. The mistake Lorimer says *"was to consider that because a letter is easy to interpret by eyes, there should not be too much difficulty in using only slightly adapted shapes by touch."* It was the major mistake made by all who developed embossed letter systems. This also includes Moon type which was developed by a blind man William Moon (1818-1894) (**Ghana 1982**). Moon is still in use today in Britain and Australia with multiple impaired and elderly blind. Another problem was the ability to write embossed letter systems. They could only be produced successfully using presses, not be written by hand.

Pam Lorimer in her doctoral thesis points out that although the alphabet had come into use approximately three thousand years ago *"a tactile version of the alphabet which could be read by blind people was not invented until two hundred years ago (Haüy, 1786) and the means of writing was not evolved until 1821. This late development of a means of literacy was caused in part by technological problems but also by a lack of understanding of the needs and capabilities of those lacking the major sense of sight. Because blind people often appeared helpless it was not realised that the remaining senses could be trained."*

It took a blind French boy, Louis Braille (1809-1854) (**Argentina 1935, France 1948, Russia 1959, Peru 1975**) to design the best system ever developed for the blind to read and write. It was based on a system designed by a French army officer, Charles Barbier for writing at night. At long last the blind could read (**Mali 1977, Germany 1975, Transkei 1977, Surinam 1981**). Not only that but it

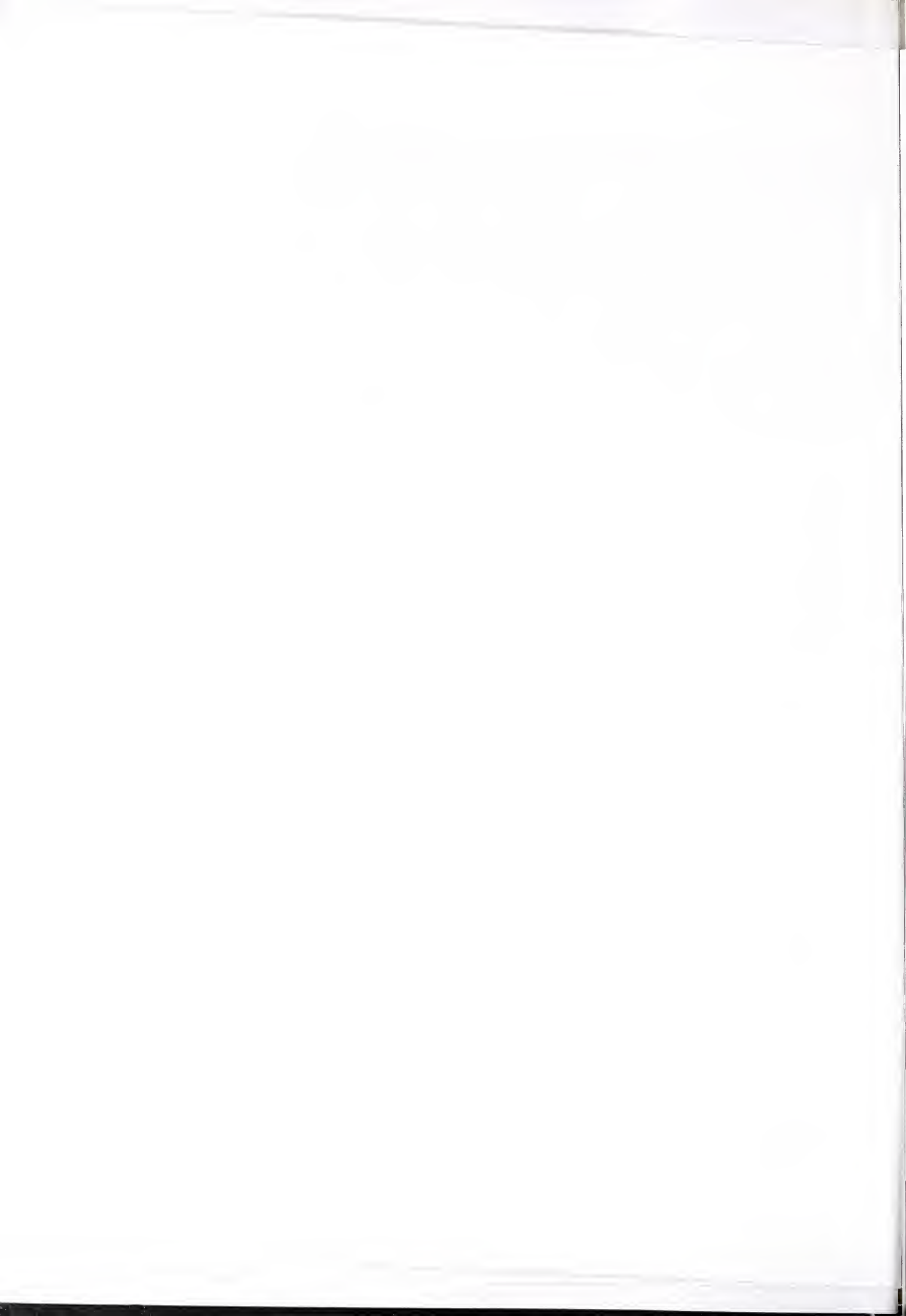


could be written using a braille slate and stylus (**Mauritus 1990**). Sir Clutha Mackenzie said in his 1954 UNESCO report on World Braille Usage *"Braille was more compact than any other system which preceded or followed it. It was outstandingly versatile, equally able to express the languages and scripts of Europe (Belgium 1975), Asia (India 1987, China 1996, Japan 1990) and Africa [Middle East] (Ghana 1972, Swaziland 1981, Saudi Arabia 1975) and, as we have seen, readily adaptable to mathematics, musical notation and other purposes. It was by using braille that blind students advanced in their education. Helen Keller, who was both deaf and blind was able to obtain a college education because of her proficiency in braille. (Mauritus 1980) She was also highly proficient in the use of the typewriter.*

Nelson Coon in his paper on the development of the modern typewriter (**Malaysia 1976**) points out that *"most of the efforts of early inventors were directed to producing machines for the use of the blind and embossed characters (in early typewriters)"* In 1779 a mechanic named Wolfgang von Kempelen designed a machine for Maria von Paradis. An Italian in 1808 designed a typewriter for use by a friend's blind daughter. Pierre Foucault, a teacher in the school for the blind in Paris made a machine that was patented in 1848 that printed embossed letters for the blind. All these and many others in many countries would eventually lead to the modern typewriter. This device proved vital for the blind as a major means of communication with the sighted. It replaced the much slower way to write and learn, long handwriting methods which were taught for many years. It also proved to be an invaluable device for the employment of a great many blind persons.

The development of braille writers (**Barbados 1981**) by persons such as Mr. Frank Hall, the superintendent of the Illinois School for the Blind in 1892 made it possible for the blind to write braille in nearly the same way as they used the typewriter. Also speedy transcription of braille books and materials became possible. This was especially so after Hall made his stereotyper in 1893 which produced thin brass sheets of braille which were then used by printing presses to mass produce braille.

The major access to education of the blind for nearly two hundred years were the schools for the blind. Since they opened in 1784 and up until about

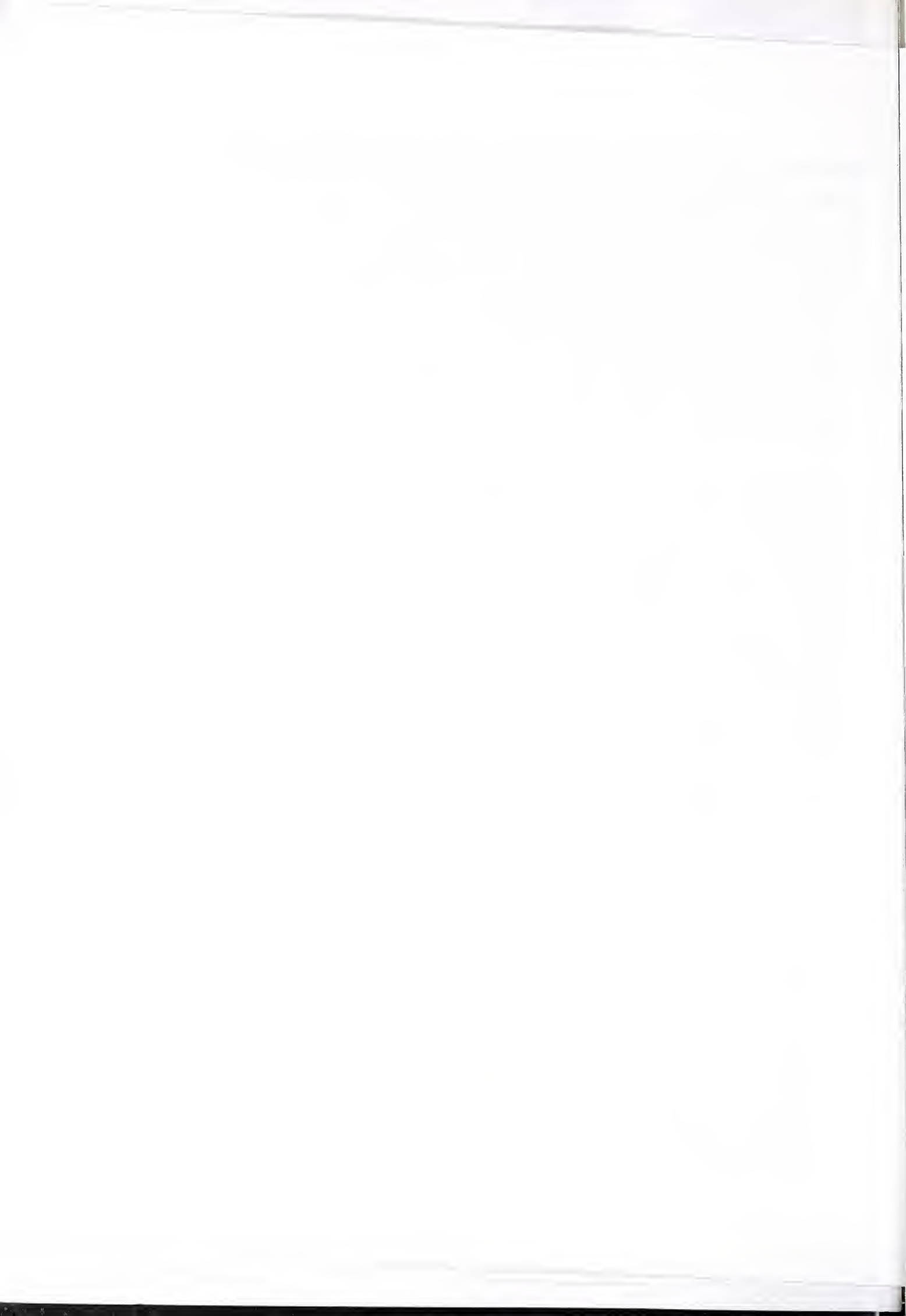


twenty-five years ago they were the means of both academic and vocational training. Schools for the blind were opened all over the world. Benjamin Constant School 1854 (**Brazil 1954**), School for the Blind in Zagreb 1895 (**Croatia 1995**), Light and Hope Society for Blind Girls, Cairo, Egypt (**Egypt 1973**), School for the Blind in Thessaloniki (**Greece 1977**), Calcutta School for the Blind, 1895 (**India 1994**), Iran Institute for the Blind (**Iran 1964**) Salvation Army School for the Blind (**Jamaica 1987**), National School for the Blind, Mexico 1870 (**Mexico 1995**), Panama School for the Blind (**Panama 1961**), Worcester Institute for the Blind, now Pioneer School, South Africa (**South Africa 1981**), Belarus School for the Blind 1887 (**Belarus 1997**).å

These schools often developed new devices or were quick to use modern technology for the education of the blind. The development of the phonograph by Thomas Edison (1877) was soon seen as a means by which books and other materials could be made accessible to the blind. It also led to the development of the Dictaphone. This device led to many more blind persons being employed as typists. Advances in audio technology during the Second World War led to the development of tape (**Greenland 1983**). By this means it was possible to record materials, lectures and take notes in class thereby giving greater independence. The radio (Marconi 1901). (**France 1938**) made it possible to have access not only to information but to share in recreational pleasures like listening to music. Short wave radio and becoming a radio ham provided the means of being in touch with the world. Many blind students became enthusiastic radio listeners and users.

The computer age (**India 1994**) has brought about many educational aids such as reading machines and personal aids like Braille n' Speak and calculators. Personal computers with voice and braille outputs mean that the blind has access to the World Wide Web and other data bases. Today the world of information is at their finger tips.

Independence came in many forms and one of the most important was independent travel, mobility. This played a great part in making it possible for the blind to get to institutions of learning. It also helped change the negative attitudes of the sighted towards the blind as they saw them being able to get around independently, instead of being assisted by sighted people

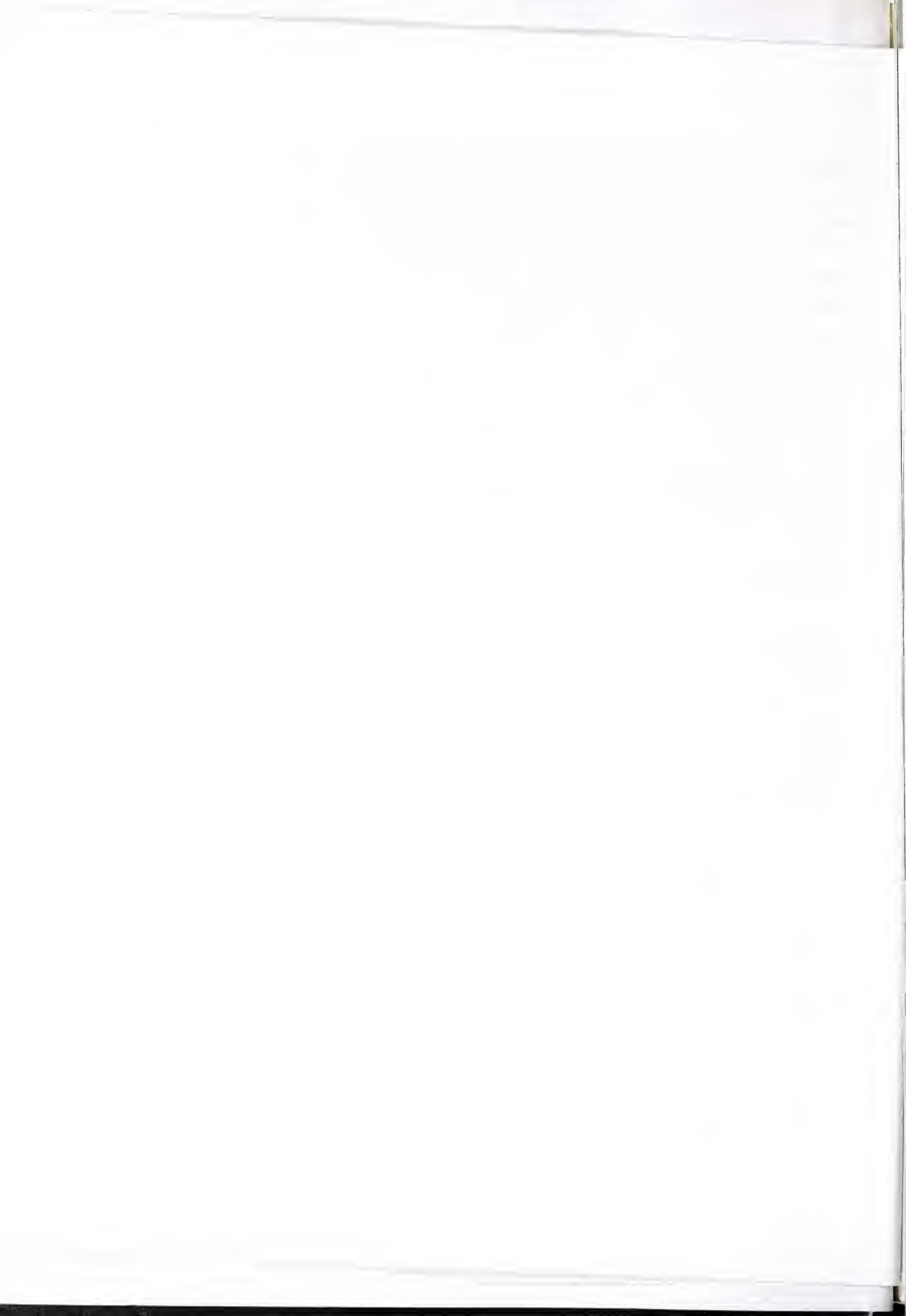


(Bosnia 1916, Ghana 1988). Pity was replaced by admiration. For hundreds of years in one form or another the blind had used stick, staff or cane to aid in mobility. Some time with disastrous results (Belgium 1954) Dogs had also been used as companions, guards and as aids (France 1957 "Blind Man and the Beggar" by Callot). It was during World War II that the cane was developed as effective mobility aid. Dr. Richard Hoover and others working with newly blind soldiers based their long cane and training method on the suggestions made by the blind director of the London Association for Promoting the General Welfare of the Blind, W. Hanks Levy in 1872.

"One of the greatest aids to him who would walk by himself is stick; this should be light and not elastic, in order that correct impressions may be transmitted from the objects with which it comes in contact to the hand of the user " (Barbados 1981, Brunei 1981, Ireland 1996) The use of guide dogs began during World War I in Germany and was in part based on the writings of Joseph Reisinger (ca.1755), Johann Wilhelm Klein in 1819 and Jacob Birrer. (Saar 1926, Isle of Man 1996, Netherlands 1964, Austria 1997, Uganda 1981)

We started this presentation with an image of two very different pictures of the blind. Homer, a great mind and in contrast blind beggars. We conclude with that of a young visually impaired girl confidently walking alone to regular school with a cane in one hand and a book in the other. She is greeted at the school door by her friendly teacher. (St. Vincent 1990). This is the new image of the blind which is being conveyed by organizations of and for the blind today, that of independence.

As we enter the new millennium we reflex on the modern history of education of the blind that was started right here in this great city of Paris 215 years ago. How the dreams of Valentine Haüy, Johann Wilhelm Klein (1765-1848) in Vienna and Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe (1801-1876) in Boston have nearly been fulfilled. Their dreams of blind children being educated alongside their sighted peers have become reality. Today inclusion is in, exclusion is out. We have come a long way from a time when most blind children were not educated and many spent much of their time begging. Today in many parts of the world the majority of blind children are mainstreamed into the regular schools. Yet the founding institutions continue to support blind



children in regular schools and serve the needs of those with multiple impairments and those who need additional support.

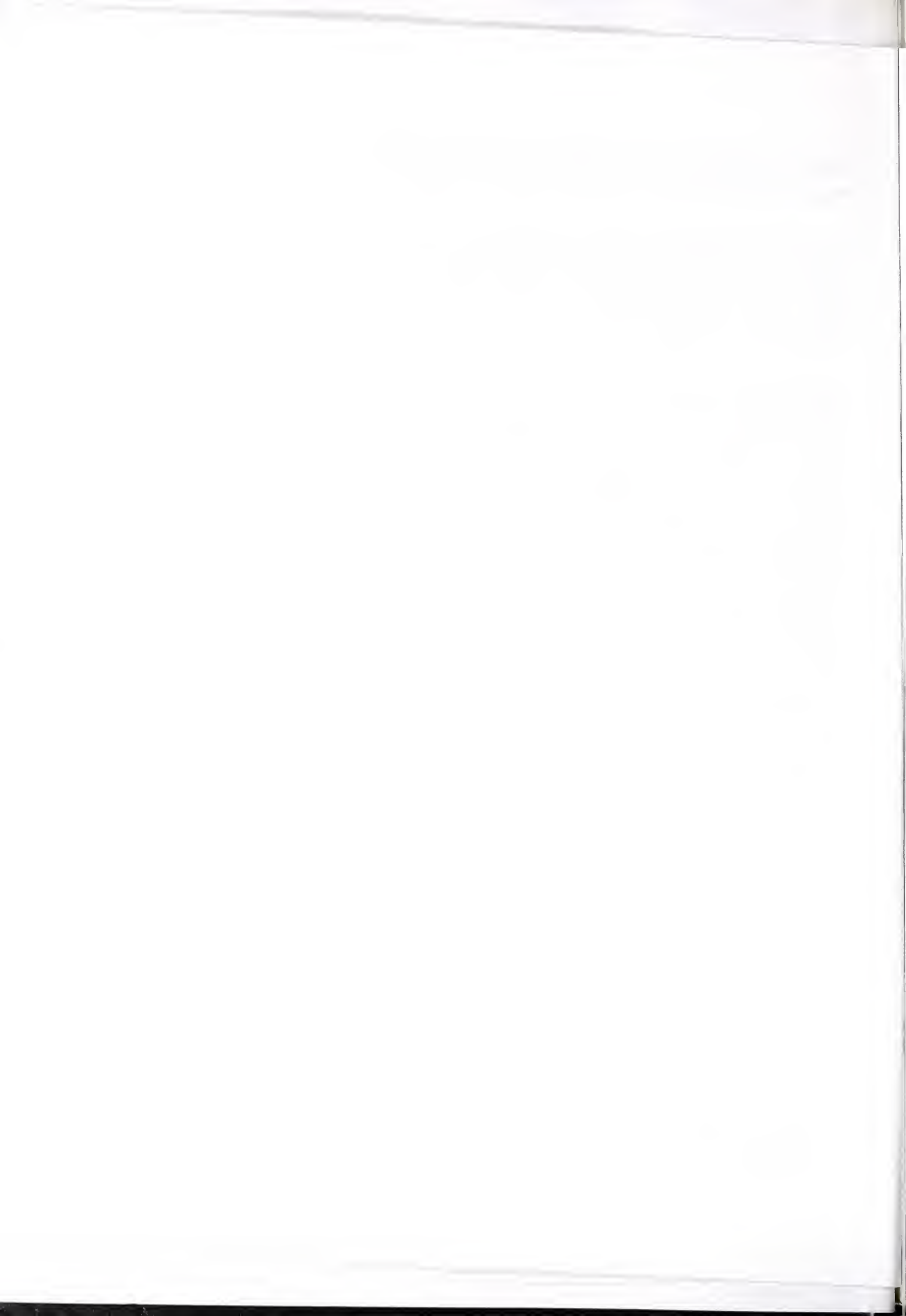
We end our presentation with a review of stamps that honor organizations of and for the blind. We especially recognize the organization that bears the name of the founder of modern day education of the blind, The Association Valentin Haüy (France 1989).

World Council for the Welfare of the Blind, now World Blind Union (Brazil 1974), Association for the Blind (Australia 1995), Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (Australia 1987), Danish Association for the Blind (Denmark 1986), Fiji Blind Society (Fiji 1976), ARLA Institute , Finish Vocational Training Center for the Blind (Finland 1992), Guide Dog Association (Great Britain 1981), Manx Blind Welfare Society (Isle of Man 1986), Malaysia Association for the Blind (Malaysia 1976), Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind (New Zealand 1989) O.N.C.E. (Spain 1988), Blind Welfare Association (Trinidad & Tobago 1989), K.N.G.F. Stichting Konichyh Netherlands Gelendehonderfods (Netherlands 1985), The Seeing Eye Inc. (United States 1979) Blinded Veterans Association (United States 1981), The Christian Association of the Blind (Liberia 1995). The World Blind Union, European Blind Union, International Council for the Education of People With Visual Impairment, Lions Clubs International and of the many other organizations by and for the blind that continue in the words of the World Blind Union *"to securing equality of opportunity and participation in society of those whom it represents"*

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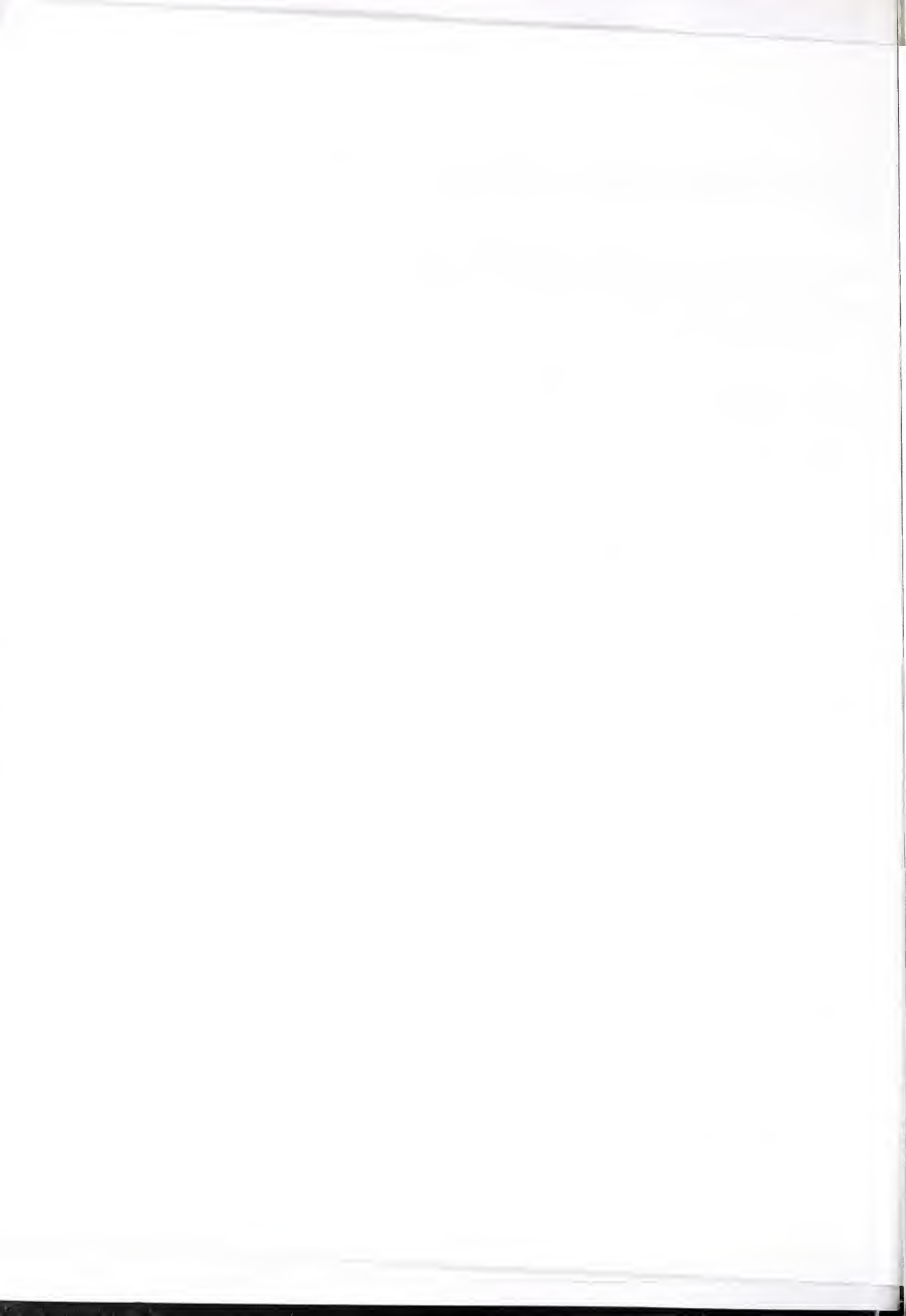
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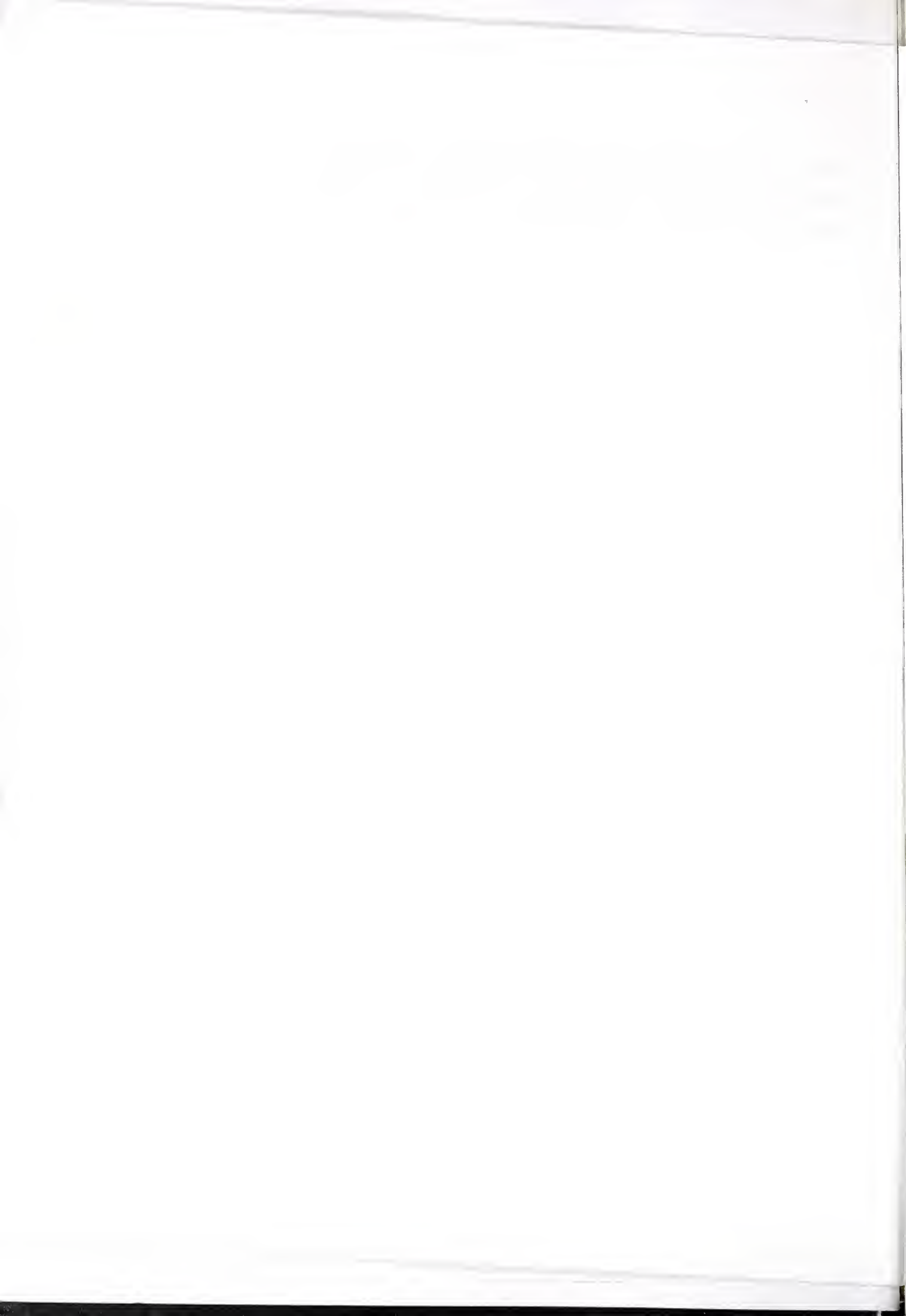
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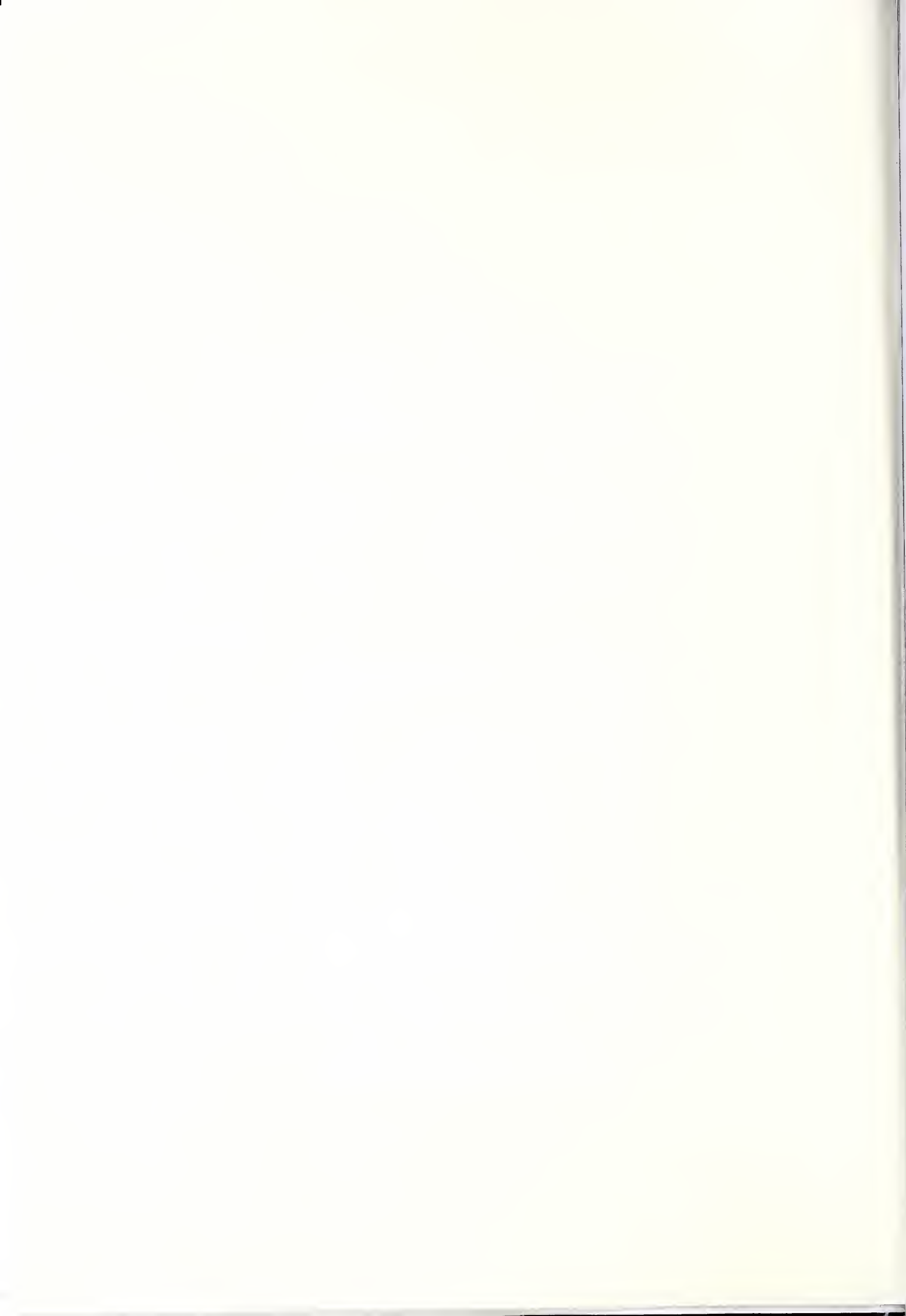


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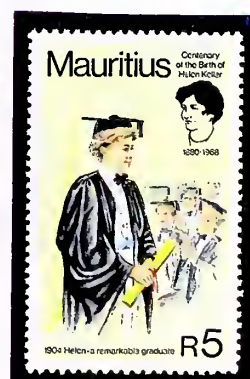
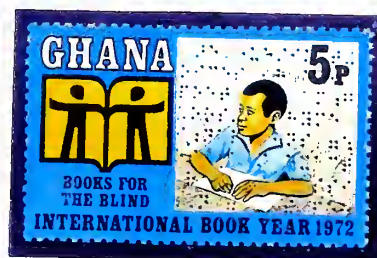
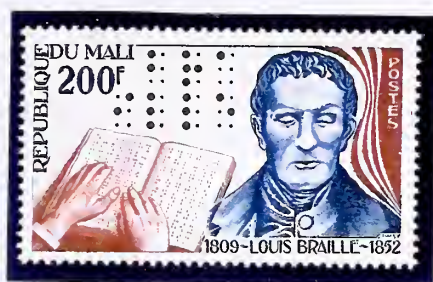














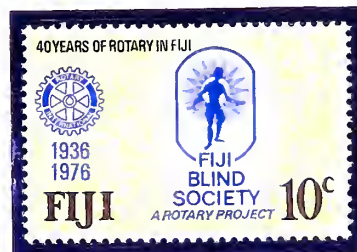
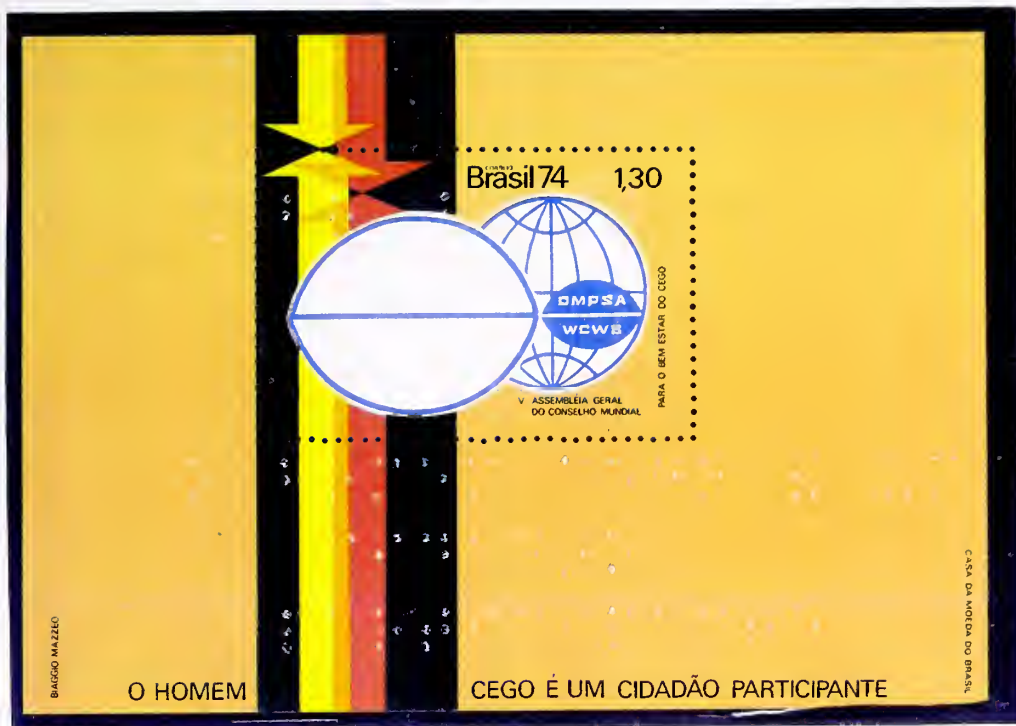












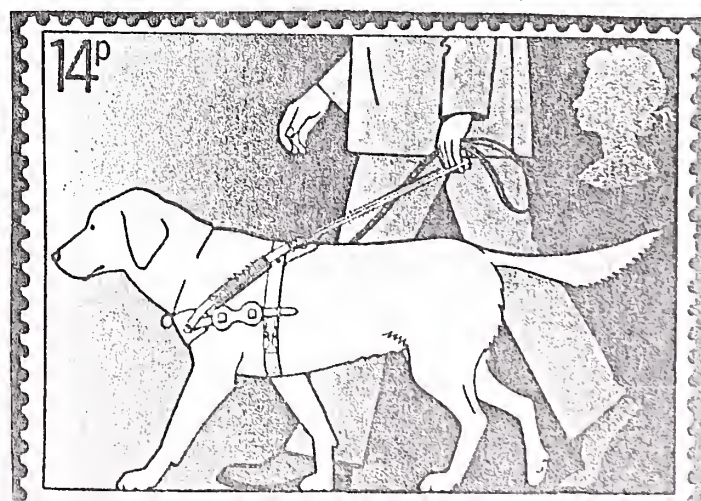
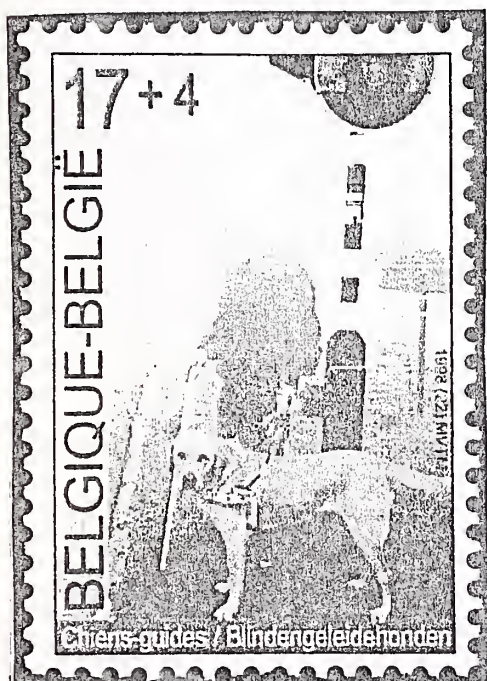
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FIRST DAY OF ISSUE
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CENTENARY OF THE
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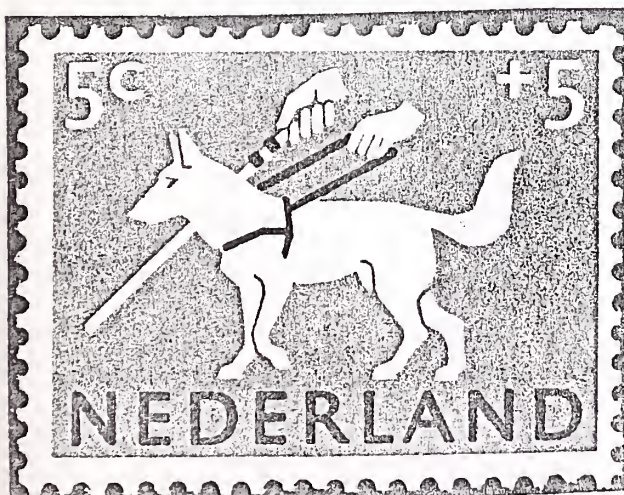
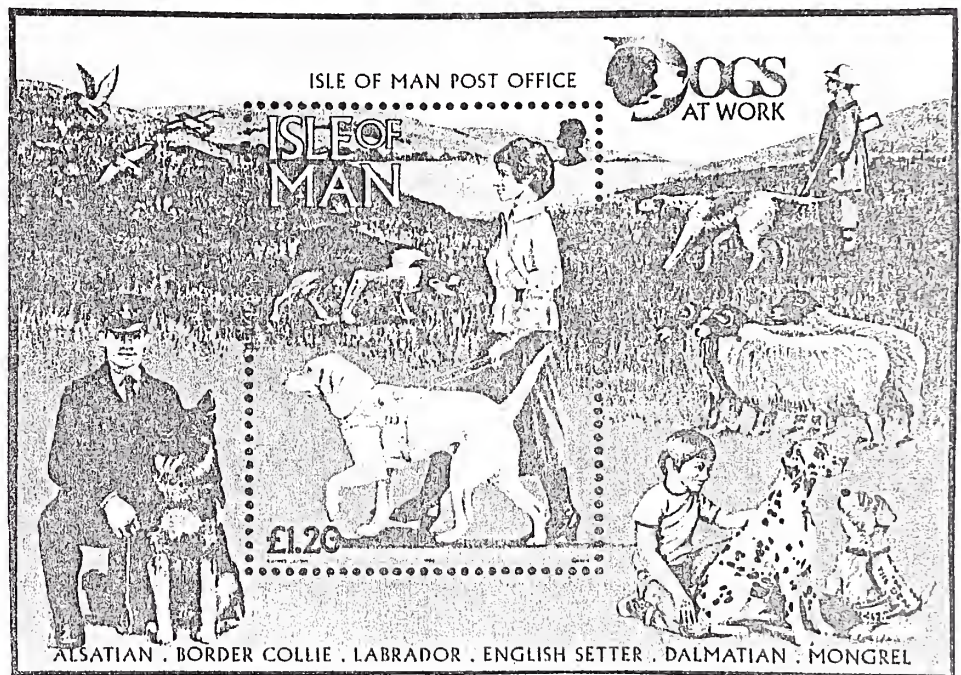
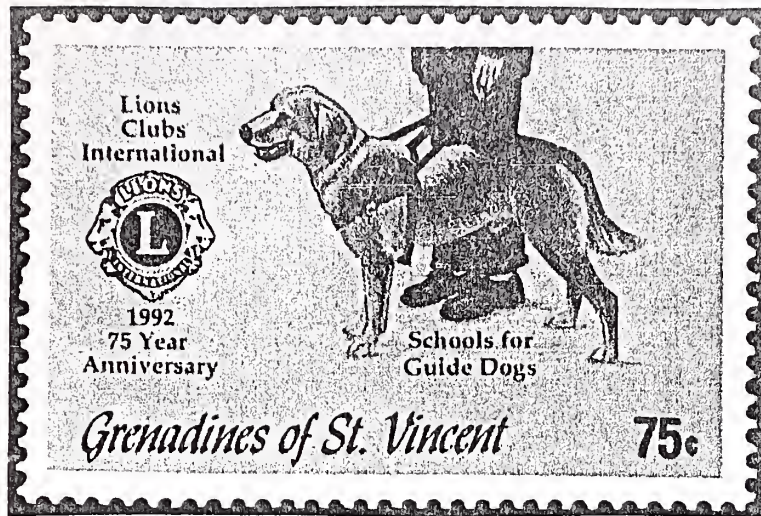




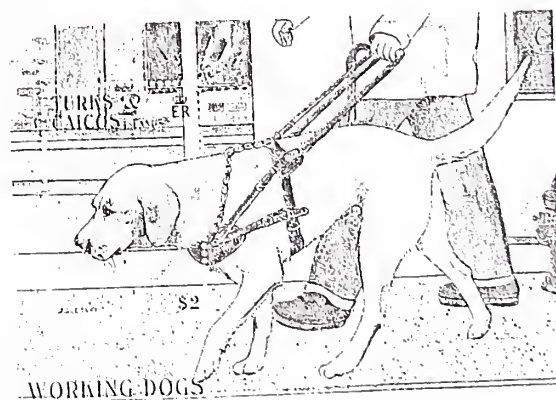
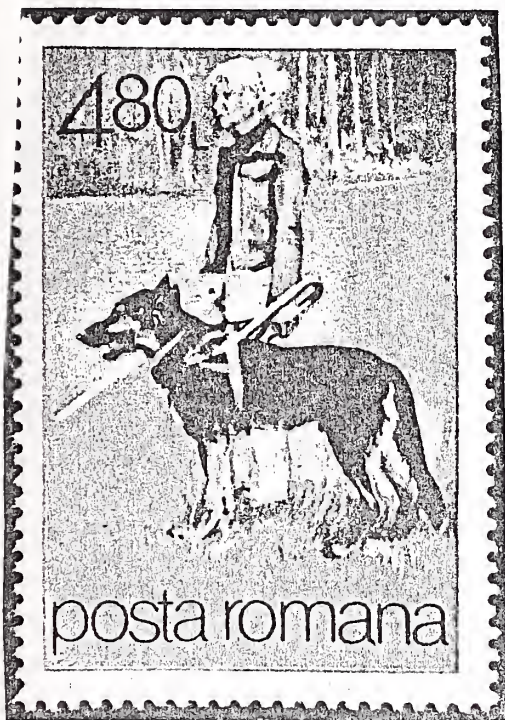
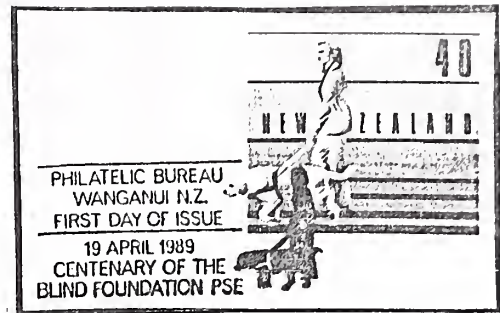
Guide Dogs
75 years on stamps
1928 - 2003















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